

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

1. (Original) An image classification apparatus for classifying image data sets added with accompanying information including information items, the image classification apparatus comprising:

accompanying information obtaining means for obtaining the accompanying information from the image data sets;

information item specification means for specifying a portion of or all of the information items of the accompanying information to be used for image classification, and for specifying priority among the specified information items; and

image classification means for classifying the image data sets into groups having a hierarchical structure of the specified information items according to the specified priority.

2. (Original) The image classification apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the accompanying information includes classification condition information representing a set of the information items to be used for image classification and

the information item specification means specifies the information items to be used for image classification according to the classification condition information.

3. (Original) The image classification apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the accompanying information includes at least one of items comprising time and date of photography, a photography condition, a photography location, a size of an image, the type of a subject, the name of the subject, the number of objects as the subject, an event, and a comment, as the information items thereof.

4. (Original) The image classification apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the accompanying information includes classification condition information representing a combination of the information items to be used for image classification and the priority thereof, and

the information item specification means specifies the information items to be used for image classification and the priority thereof, according to the classification condition information.

5. (Original) The image classification apparatus according to claim 4, wherein the accompanying information includes at least one of items comprising time and date of photography condition, a photography location, a size of an image, the type of a subject, the name of the subject, the number of the objects as the subject, an event, and a comment, as the information items thereof.

6. (Original) The image classification apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the accompanying information includes at least one of items comprising time and date of photography, a photography condition, a photography location, a size of an image, the type of a subject, the name of the subject, the number of objects as the subject, an event, and a comment, as the information items thereof.

7. (Currently Amended) A ~~program for causing a computer to execute a process of~~method for classifying image data sets added with accompanying information including information items, the ~~program-method~~method comprising the steps of :

obtaining the accompanying information from the image data sets;

specifying a portion of or all of the information items of the accompanying information to be used for image classification and for specifying priority among the specified information items; and

classifying the image data sets into groups having a hierarchical structure of the specified information items according to the specified priority.

8. (Currently Amended) The ~~program-method~~method according to claim 7, wherein the accompanying information includes classification condition information representing a set of the information items to be used for image classification, and

the step of specifying the information items is the step of specifying the information items to be used for image classification according to the classification condition information.

9. (Currently Amended) The ~~program~~method according to claim 8, wherein the accompanying information includes at least one of items comprising time and date of photography, a photography condition, a photography location, a size of an image, the type of a subject, the name of the subject, the number of objects as the subject, an event, and a comment, as the information items thereof.

10. (Currently Amended) The ~~program~~method according to claim 7, wherein the accompanying information includes classification condition information representing a combination of the information items to be used for image classification and the priority thereof, and

the step of specifying the information items and the priority is the step of specifying the information items to be used for image classification and the priority thereof, according to the classification condition information.

11. (Currently Amended) The ~~program~~method according to claim 10, wherein the accompanying information includes at least one of items comprising time and date of photography, a photography condition, a photography location, a size of an image, the type of a subject, the name of the subject, the number of objects as the subject, and event, and a comment, as the information items thereof.

12. (Currently Amended) The ~~program~~method according to claim 7, wherein the accompanying information includes at least one of items comprising time and date of photography, a photography condition, a photography location, a size of an image, the type of a subject, the name of the subject, the number of objects as the subject, an event, and a comment, as the information items thereof.

13. (Currently Amended) A computer readable recording medium storing thereon a program for causing a computer to execute a ~~process of~~method for classifying image data sets added with accompanying information including information items, the ~~program—method~~ comprising the steps of:

obtaining the accompanying information from the image data steps;

specifying a portion of or all of the information items of the accompanying information to be used for image classification and for specifying priority among the specified information items; and

classifying the image data sets into groups having a hierarchical structure of the specified information items according to the specified priority.

14. (Original) The computer readable recording medium according to claim 13, wherein the accompanying information includes classification condition information representing a set of the information items to be used for image classification, and

the step of specifying the information items is the step of specifying the information items to be used for image classification according to the classification condition information.

15. (Original) The computer readable recording medium according to claim 14, wherein the accompanying information includes at least one of items comprising time and date of photography, a photography condition, a photography location, a size of an image, the type of a subject, the name of the subject, the number of objects as the subject, an event, and a comment, as the information items thereof.

16. (Original) The computer readable recording medium according to claim 13, wherein the accompanying information includes classification condition information representing a combination of the information items to be used for image classification and the priority thereof, and

the step of specifying the information items and the priority is the step of specifying the information items to be used for image classification condition information.

17. (Original) The computer readable recording medium according to claim 16, wherein the accompanying information includes at least one of items comprising time and date of photography, a photography condition, a photography location, a size of an image, the type of a subject, an event, and a comment, as the information items thereof.

18. (Original) The computer readable recording medium according to claim 13, wherein the accompanying information includes at least one of items comprising time and date of photography, a photography condition, a photography location, a size of an image, the type of a subject, the name of the subject, the number of objects as the subject, an event, and a comment, as the information items thereof.

19. (New) The image classification apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the hierarchical structure of each of the groups has a plurality of layers,

wherein a lower layer in the hierarchical structure is associated with a group having a lower order of priority; and

wherein an image data set is classified into a group in the lowest layer of the hierarchical structure, the lower layer being a layer corresponding to the information item that has the lowest order of priority among the information items included in the accompanying information.

20. (New) The computer readable recording medium according to claim 13, wherein the hierarchical structure of each of the groups has a plurality of layers,

wherein a lower layer in the hierarchical structure is associated with a group having a lower order of priority; and

wherein an image data set is classified into a group in the lowest layer of the hierarchical structure, the lower layer being a layer corresponding to the information item that has the lowest order of priority among the information items included in the accompanying information.